

Establishing Peace in Conflict-Prone Areas—Perceptions of Secondary School Teachers in Case of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa

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Abstract

The United States led Operation in Afghanistan and the subsequent dislodging of the Afghan Taliban from power led to the sneaking of Taliban and AL-Qaeda into the neighboring countries. The areas adjoining Pak Afghan border offered one such safe places of refuge. Highly rugged and inhospitable, mostly inaccessible, geography of the area provides a safe haven for outlaws, smugglers, criminals and terrorists (Ahmad, 2008). The infiltration and spread of militant elements within FATA and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa soon ended up in terror attacks against military and civilian targets inside Pakistan. This paper provides an overview of the events which culminated in this conflict situation and analyzes how the peculiar geo-political landscape of the area was exploited by the terrorists. It then moves on to discuss the role of peace education in bringing about normalcy, peace and stability in the war affected areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. This is done on the basis of the perceptions of the secondary school teachers. The thrust of the paper is that durable peace will require institutional endeavors to inculcate peaceful behaviors and attitudes among the citizens.

Key words: Peace, Conflict, Terrorism, War, immune, infiltration, institutional, endeavors.

Introduction

With the fall of Taliban regime in Kabul in 2001 and the subsequent US-led military offensive in Afghanistan, Pakistan has been in a sticky situation. Although the entire country felt the impact of being a front line ally of the US in its war against terror, the worst hit parts remain KP and FATA. One of the worst hit sectors was education as schools were destroyed by the terrorists, parents and students threatened and teachers kidnapped for ransom. One of the reasons that led to make the situation out of control is that the country leaders has forget their responsibilities to educate their young generation about peace.

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Montessori (1930) is so apt in saying that those who want to go for war , they endow their young for war; however contrary to this those who stand for peace, they unfortunately neglect their children and adolescents which leave them unable to materialize their potential for peace.

Review of Literature

In the present scenario, in case of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, most of the time educational institutions are affected by terrorism. Williams (2004) believes that terrorism shatters the peaceful academic environment inside educational institutions (p.41). Indeed peace, education, and progress are sine qua non for socio-economic development of a country. Conflicts like the one that plagued Khyber Pakhtunkhwa and FATA during last several years has well and truly retarded economic development and deeply affected the social fabric. Rajagopalan (2009) has truly depicted this picture of the Pakistani society about which he asserted that the Pakistani society is in a mesh interwoven among the three major parties that is, the Taliban, and the Pakistani government; and the US-led forces. This, no doubt, is a very challenging task. Education for peace is the foundation for establishing lasting peace (Asmal et al, 1997; Callega, 1994). This is a significant method for developing a sense of reconciliation (Kriesberg, 1998). Because of the role peace education play in bringing about peace it needs to be discussed a little bit further. Peace scholars such as: Harris and Morrison (2003), opines that peace "refers to the human endeavor to put hands together for conflict resolution, respect equality, fulfill fundamental needs, and human rights", (p. 12). Harris (n.d), believes that the ultimate aim of peace education is "to prepare people for peace and to make them aware about the dangers of violence and to enable them to develop strategies for peace when needed". The same idea is expounded by Srinivasan (2009) who says that it is a process in which people learn about the horrors of violence, and thereby develop their potential to combat violence and develop

and maintain peace. Hence the prevention of wars and the establishment of peace is the prime objective of peace education.

As mentioned earlier that the ongoing war on terrorism has blatantly affected the socio-economic growth of Pakistan in general and of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa in particular. In order to be able to regain the lost momentum of socio-economic development, there is a need to examine the causes of conflict that brought so much misery and destruction and also to reflect on how to avert such eventualities in future. More importantly, there is a need to safeguard future generations from the ravages of wars and conflict. The youth must be enabled not to fall prey to manipulation by the militants; they must build capacity to transform conflict situations through peaceful means. This study is an attempt to examine how this can be done.

The problem under investigation is “Establishing Peace in Conflict-Prone Areas: Perceptions of Secondary School Teachers in case of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa”. As evident, it dilates on the voices of secondary school teachers with regard to the role of peace education in establishing long term and durable peace in FATA and Pakhtunkhwa (henceforth referred to as KP). The key questions that this paper addresses include:

1. What suggestions the secondary school teachers present for the promotion of peace in KP?
2. How could the secondary school environment be made more peace-promoting?
3. In what ways co-curricular activities can be rendered for the promotion of peace?

Research Methodology

This is a qualitative study in which open-ended questionnaire was administered to the sample. Male and female teachers at secondary school level were the respondents. Multi-stage random sampling technique was used.

Three districts (Swabi, Manshera, and Peshawar) were selected from the whole province of KP, while from each district 10 schools with 10 teachers each were selected for data collection. Data was collected through questionnaire, which consisted of five open-ended questions. Pilot study was conducted for the pre-testing of questionnaire. To ensure the validity and reliability of the instrument, Cronbach Alpha was administered which was 0.91.

Results

The respondents were asked the following open-ended questions:

- Q 1. Suggest at least four patterns for the establishment of peace in KP.
- Q 2. What are the main causes of conflict in KP? Enumerate at least 04 causes.
- Q 3. How can peace be promoted among secondary school students in KP?
- Q 4. Give at least 03 suggestions for making peace education as a tool for peace.

During thematic analysis, the responses of the sample respondents were logically arranged. After giving the responses proper arrangement, these responses were coded. In order to present the data in understandable form, the primary themes were developed, from primary themes secondary themes were determined, and from secondary themes universal themes were derived.

Results of question no. 1

Question No. 1 was, “Suggest at least four patterns for the establishment of peace in KP”, a number of respondents proposed that primary education needs to be made universal. Secondary themes were: “verity in educative process”, “positive activities”, “awareness campaign”. In first secondary theme “verity in educative process” a majority of (49) respondents proposed Islamization of education, while 19 being in favor of introducing peace education. The second universal theme “positive activities” five respondents highlight that seminars and rallies must be organized, while 10 respondents

pointed out that positive role of media is necessary. In the third secondary theme “awareness campaign”, it was suggested by 108 respondents that education is a powerful tool for establishing peace, 9 respondents were in favor of enhancing public awareness.

The second universal theme in Question No.1 was “curriculum”.

According to the opinion of 8 respondents, curriculum must be uniform. A number of respondents, that if common problems are solved it will be a positive step towards peace establishment. Majority of the respondents proposed to solve or address the “common problems” of the general public. Secondary themes, from which this universal theme was derived, were “social injustice”, “solving social problems”, “addressing terrorism” and “eliminating all forms of differences”. With reference to social injustice, some respondents (09) recommended that every citizen must have “the ease of excess to fundamental needs and rights”, 11 respondents suggested that solution of public problems is necessary. According to 15 respondents fundamental needs of everyone be addressed, while 36 respondents highlighted that inequality should be eliminated from society, while 8 respondents opined against corruption and suggested its eradication from the society. Regarding general problems 50 respondents were of the view to at least reduce Unemployment if its total elimination is difficult. Poverty is the next challenge faced by the society, about which 22 respondents recommended its eradication. Fifteen respondents suggested the “Betterment of law and order” situation. Ten respondents suggested to bring “inflation rate” under control however 9 respondents were of the view that “practical steps be taken by the government” to address general public problems. Eight respondents supported the establishing peace in KP for which “discussion with Taliban” in their opinion would be a meaningful step in the establishment of peace in KP. Ten respondents were of the view that “Afghan refugees are to be sent back to their

country". In eliminating differences 19 respondents believed that "sectarianism" must be discouraged everywhere in the region".

Results of Question no. 2

Question No. 2, was, "What are the main causes of conflict in KP? Enumerate at least 04 causes". Majority of the respondents replied that "lack of education" is the main cause of violence in KP. Related to this universal theme, the secondary themes proposed by most of the participants were: "lack of awareness about education" and "lack of awareness about peace". With reference to the secondary theme "lack of awareness about education", a whopping number of 101 respondents recommended that "lack of awareness about education" is the fundamental cause of unrest in KP, however, 36 respondents thought that "lack of Islamic education" is the basic reason which creates instability. Furthermore, they argued that due to the so called religious scholars who put forward a misguided interpretation of the sacred message of Islam, terrorism and extremism is indoctrinated. The next point proposed by 10 respondents was "Illiterate family background". It was suggested by four (04) of the respondents that neglecting female education is also the root cause of instability in society.

The next theme was "lack of awareness" which was highlighted by just 04 respondents, 19 respondents considered that "the misguided and ignorant yet apparently the religious scholars" are the main cause of exacerbating terrorism in the region. The second universal theme was "basic causes of terrorism" under which further themes were "social equality", "absence of state attention", and "involvement of foreign countries". Majority of the respondents (38) suggested that the menace of "unemployment" escalates conflict in society, while according to 20 respondents "corruption" equally contributes to create a sense of deprivation among the masses. In this respect 10 respondents were of the view that "absence of tolerance" which

prevails in the society paves way for instability in society, while 12 respondents opined that “bribery” is the fundamental cause of terrorism while 10 respondents recommended that “negative thinking” is responsible for generating terrorism in the region. There were just 07 respondents who believed that the ongoing terrorist activities destroy the establishment of peace however, 5 respondents thought of “poverty” as the fundamental source of public deprivation that ultimately leads to terrorism.

The next theme in Question No. 2 was “lack of state attention” which consisted of further secondary themes such as, “lack of equality”. In the light of recommendation of 12 respondents “the negative role of media” also exacerbates unrest and sensation among the masses. Some respondents (05) thought that “the ongoing military operation in the province” is aggravating the situation in the region.

Regarding the next theme viz. “foreign interference” a sound majority of the respondents (43) believed that “foreign interference” cannot be neglected as it is the potential cause of terrorism. In this respect 11 respondents opined that “illegal activities and involvement of foreign agencies” is detrimental to the establishment of peace in the province.

The forth universal theme was Regional insecurity; secondary themes in this universal theme were “conflict issue of Afghanistan”, and “security lapses”. Regarding the conflict situation in Afghan majority of the respondents (35) suggested that “Afghan issue” is a major factor for insecurity in the concerned region. Next universal theme is “poor security”. The concept given by (25) respondents is “drone attacks”, while another point recommended by most of the respondents is “the poor security of borders”. Another universal theme was, “lack of political wisdom”, under which fall the themes such as: “weak policies and implementation” and “irrational approach to addressing social problems”. With reference to this aspect 17 respondents reported that

“weak and poor foreign policies coupled with poor implementation reveal the sad state affair of the absence of wisdom on the part of the political leaders. Similarly 04 respondents reported that “weak policies by the state” give an obvious proof that there is the lack of political wisdom. In this question the last secondary theme was “social problems” about which some respondents (4) proposed that “gap between the poor and the rich” is one of the reasons of social problems in the region. Similarly 08 respondents thought that “overall poor economic condition in the country” is exacerbating the state of unrest in the society. Some of the respondents (9) were of the opinion that imbalance between “needs and resources” is one of social problems that contribute to the general unrest.

Results of Question no. 3

Question no.3 asked, “How can peace be promoted among secondary school students in KP?”, it was found that majority of the respondents reported that for the establishment of peace, “peace-promoting education” be introduced in the curricula at secondary school level. Under this universal theme subsidiary themes were: “curriculum”, “education for positive behavior change”, “devising peace promoting education”, and “teachers’ role in peace building”. Regarding this theme, a majority of the respondents (34) stressed the inclusion of peace education as a course in the curriculum of teachers training. Other respondents (92) emphasized that “peace education should be made part of the curriculum” especially the at secondary school level. Similarly 35 respondents were of the view to, “make Islamic teachings a compulsory part of the curriculum”, while 46 respondents suggested that it will be beneficial for establishing general peace to inculcate peaceful behaviors through co-curricular activities such as sports events etc.

Regarding the next theme that is, “education for positive behavior change”, 17 respondents emphasized to initiate “peace awareness campaigns”

among the general public, while 6 of the respondents favored the “expansion of education” in the relatively less developed regions of the province. Similarly 09 respondents asserted that the possible mechanism for establishing peace can be the utilization of the “positive role and contribution of media services” while a few 05 respondents pointed that “positive thinking” may be developed among citizens. The third secondary theme was “devising peace promoting education”, about which 7 respondents were in favor of introducing “human rights education”. A total of just six respondents replied that “peaceful educational environment” especially inside the school premises is needed, while 7 respondents emphasized merit-based employment. The next theme was about “teachers’ role”, about which 7 respondents stressed, “collaboration and linkage between teachers and parents”.

Results of Question No. 4

Question no.4 was, “Give at least 03 suggestions for making peace education as a tool for peace”. The first universal theme was “equal-opportunity-based access to education for every citizen”, under which further themes were: “increasing literacy rate”, “peace- promoting curriculum” and “circulating printed materials on peace”. Similarly 22 respondents emphasized to launch campaigns regarding “awareness about peace” among the masses. Ten respondents were of the view that “peace education may be made part of the curriculum at elementary level” so as to endow the young generation with peaceful behaviors. Some respondents (13) opined that, “peace may be strengthened” through a variety of channels and sources. Regarding literacy rate “free education system” for relatively less developed areas was proposed by a few respondents (04). “The positive role of media” was suggested by 15 respondents for the better expansion of education. Eleven respondents suggested that the state need to ensure a “peaceful educational environment” inside and outside the educational institution. In this respect another theme was

to implement a “uniform peace-promoting curriculum”. In this aspect majority of the respondents (44) replied that “peace promoting curriculum” may be started at least at school level. A number of respondents recommended that “uniform curriculum” is to be introduced for every educational institution. Nineteen (19) respondents proposed that “Peace education should be included in the curriculum of teacher-training institutions”. However, 27 respondents suggested that curriculum should be a clear picture of “Islamic education”, 5 respondents considered “uniform system of education for all”. The other theme in Question no.4 was to disseminate information about the significance of peace through “publications on peace”. About this aspect a large number of respondents (67) emphasized that “peace publications” for all. However 76 respondents suggested the initiation of “co-curricular activities” for peaceful co-existence.

The second universal theme was “positive role of society”, under which further theme was “developing a sense of ‘We-feelings’ together with community participation”. Seven (07) respondents recommended that first of all it is essential to have a “sense of rights and duties”, however, some respondents emphasized to “develop a sense of reconciliation” among the people. Twenty six respondents stressed “Parents involvement” however, four respondents suggested to ensure a strong “teacher-community coordination” as an effective step. The final theme in this section was to minimize the influx of undue interference from the side of politicians. Regarding this aspect ten respondents recommended to eradicate or at least minimize “unemployment”. A total of 12 respondents proposed to “eliminate political differences.

Conclusions and Recommendations

This study was to explore secondary school teacher’s point of view and causes of ongoing conflict in KP and necessary policy prescription for durable peace, stability and prosperity in the area. The questionnaire consisted of 04

open-ended questions. The first question was “Suggest at least four patterns for the establishment of peace in KP”. Here valuable and important suggestions were given by the respondents, for peace establishment in society. They suggested that easy and powerful mechanism for the establishment of lasting peace, in the views of respondents, is “universalization of education”. Furthermore they indicated to the easy and effective role of media in this regard. They also suggested adoption of uniform curriculum in educational institutions. However, the most significant step that was highlighted by the respondents was to address on emergency basis the general issues and problems. The respondents indicated to the elimination of the prevalent social injustice, galloping ratio of unemployment, corruption and tax evasion, and ensuring equal opportunity based excess to fundamental rights. No doubt, the people of KP, because of terrorism, suffered more as compared to the other parts of the hence, the state will have to take such steps that will on one hand be a soothing gesture for the people of this region together with sustained efforts to eradicate incidents of terrorism.

Regarding addressing the causes of conflict in KP, most of the respondents recommended expansion of education to the people. Negligence towards female education is also a cause that paves way for extremism, other causes are: being lack of social justice, inadequate state attention, international interference, high ratio of unemployment, rampant corruption, extreme poverty coupled with the absence of tolerance. Negative role of media has also been seen as a contributory factor to conflict in society. Although a necessity at times, military operation has been viewed by some as the cause of lingering conflict. It is high time that adequate policy focus is shifted towards effective border management along Pak Afghan porous border to check illegal cross border movement of people, including non state actors.

However, the key to long term and durable peace and security of KP hinges on how best peace education is imparted to the young generation. It is only through peace education that the future generations can better thwart the emergence and growth of militancy and terror infrastructure in future. Such an education system should, according to the majority of respondents, be free, equally available to all, value-based, uniform, and should promote tolerance, peace and prosperity. In fact, such an education should be introduced from primary level for better guidance and character build up of young generation. This would, as rightly pointed out by the respondents, necessitate designing a well wrought peace education curriculum in place of the existing one. Moreover, co-curricular activities for positive attitude, harmony and tolerance are also essential for peace-oriented mindset and culture. Keeping students engaged in positive activities and healthy pursuits is an effective way to keep them away from unpleasant environment to be attracted to the militant cause. The road to the achievement of a peaceful and prosperous KP is neither short nor easy but with long term and result-oriented policy prescriptions like the implementation of peace education can prove to be quantum leap forward along the road.



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